



Australian  
Bureau of  
Statistics

30 June 1996

EMBARGO: 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) FRI 3 JAN 1997

# Trade Union Statistics

## Australia



ABS Catalogue No. 6323.0

## NOTES

### CHANGES IN THIS ISSUE

This issue contains data previously published in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) standard data service *Trade Union Statistics, Australia, 1995* (6322.0.40.001). Data on trade union membership for 1994 and earlier years was published in *Trade Union Statistics, Australia* (6323.0).

### SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES

Where estimates have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

n.p. not available for publication but included in totals where otherwise indicated  
— nil or rounded to zero

### INQUIRIES

For further information about statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics, contact Information Services on Melbourne (03) 9615 7000 or Henry Ferst on Melbourne (03) 9615 7980.

For information about other ABS statistics and services, please refer to the back of this publication.

W. McLennan  
Australian Statistician

## CONTENTS

	Page
Main features	5
 TABLES	
1 Number of unions, 1991–96	7
2 Number of members, 1991–96	7
3 Trade union members: proportion of total employees, 1991–96	8
4 Number of States and/or Territories of operation, 1991–96	9
5 Number of unions according to size of union, 1992–96	9
6 Number of members according to size of union, 1992–96	10
 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
Explanatory notes	11



## MAIN FEATURES

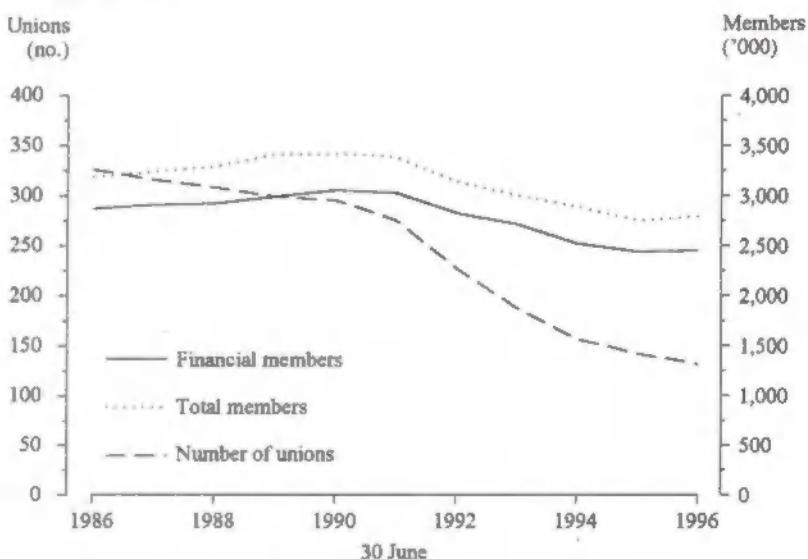
Based on the results of the recently conducted Trade Union Census, at 30 June 1996 there were 132 trade unions in Australia. Total membership reported was 2,800,500 of which 2,450,400 were reported as financial members.

The total number of trade unions has decreased by 10 since 1995. Amalgamations were the main cause for the reduction, with seven unions merging to form three larger unions in the year to 30 June 1996.

Between 1986 and 1996 the number of unions decreased by 194, with the most significant decline occurring since 1991.

According to trade union records the number of financial union members in Australia increased by 10,700 in the year to 30 June 1996. The proportion of union members in terms of total members and financial members to total employees in Australia has remained unchanged since 1995 at 40% and 35% respectively.

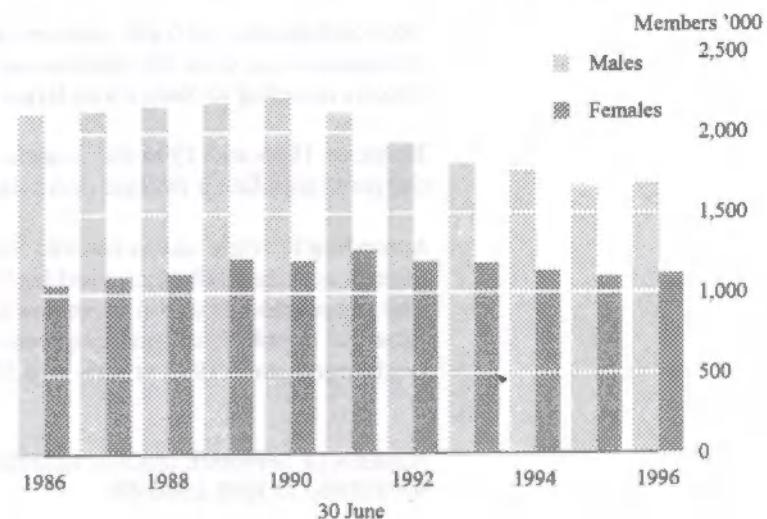
NUMBER OF SEPARATE UNIONS: NUMBER OF FINANCIAL MEMBERS AND TOTAL MEMBERS, 30 JUNE 1986-96



Source: Tables 1 and 2.

Small increases occurred in both male and female total membership of trade unions. At 30 June 1996, the reported trade union membership for males stood at 1,684,000 representing 43% of total employed males. Female membership for the same period stood at 1,116,000, representing 35% of total employed females.

#### TRADE UNION MEMBERS, TOTAL MALE AND FEMALE, 30 JUNE 1986-96



Source: Table 2.

## 1 NUMBER OF UNIONS

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.(a)
<b>As at 30 June</b>									
1991	150	146	115	121	118	110	55	58	275
1992	124	114	94	95	95	91	46	54	227
1993	93	89	69	68	72	67	35	41	188
1994	81	71	57	56	59	54	27	30	157
1995	73	61	51	49	56	49	27	29	142
1996	71	57	51	48	54	48	26	32	132

(a) Australian totals do not equal the sum of the States and Territories. See paragraph 3 of the Explanatory Notes.

## 2 NUMBER OF MEMBERS

	NSW(a)	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT(a)	Aust.
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	000
MALES									
<b>As at 30 June</b>									
1991 — Financial	643.6	502.1	257.7	169.8	165.9	53.4	9.4	30.0	1 831.8
Total	762.5	573.5	300.5	186.8	186.9	59.3	11.7	34.3	2 115.5
1992 — Financial	573.4	464.1	239.5	157.4	160.3	51.5	8.2	27.7	1 682.1
Total	683.9	522.0	279.9	176.8	178.6	57.2	9.9	31.1	1 939.4
1993 — Financial	525.5	429.4	243.6	158.4	156.3	51.3	8.1	32.1	1 604.7
Total	614.0	482.4	273.1	174.6	167.1	55.6	9.2	36.5	1 812.6
1994 — Financial	497.1	375.6	231.5	143.5	124.2	45.4	8.3	30.5	1 456.1
Total	617.2	455.7	274.7	163.5	145.4	51.2	9.7	37.2	1 754.6
1995 — Financial	495.3	353.8	227.2	130.0	115.8	41.3	8.7	22.4	1 394.5
Total	596.4	420.8	266.0	150.8	138.5	47.1	9.8	26.9	1 656.4
1996 — Financial	501.0	352.6	230.0	129.4	116.9	41.5	9.5	24.0	1 404.8
Total	598.0	434.4	282.1	148.8	135.2	46.2	10.6	28.9	1 684.3
FEMALES									
<b>As at 30 June</b>									
1991 — Financial	423.9	325.7	171.0	114.2	96.6	35.3	7.9	21.6	1 196.2
Total	454.6	338.5	183.8	119.2	103.0	36.3	8.8	22.8	1 267.0
1992 — Financial	411.7	291.0	162.5	114.6	96.2	35.9	7.2	21.5	1 140.5
Total	428.4	305.0	175.2	120.4	99.1	36.9	7.9	22.7	1 195.7
1993 — Financial	396.3	265.8	169.5	112.7	98.9	37.1	7.5	22.8	1 110.5
Total	423.6	288.2	183.4	119.3	102.8	38.4	8.1	23.8	1 187.5
1994 — Financial	389.8	253.2	171.3	107.2	81.3	34.9	7.5	22.6	1 067.8
Total	416.5	268.9	182.8	115.9	84.2	35.8	7.8	23.7	1 135.6
1995 — Financial	385.1	234.6	176.1	100.5	83.8	34.9	9.0	21.2	1 045.2
Total	405.2	248.8	185.5	106.9	86.4	36.3	9.2	21.6	1 099.9
1996 — Financial	390.6	230.7	181.3	94.8	82.4	35.4	8.7	21.7	1 045.6
Total	419.6	245.6	195.2	101.7	86.5	36.5	8.8	22.4	1 116.2
PERSONS									
<b>As at 30 June</b>									
1991 — Financial	1 067.4	827.8	428.7	284.0	262.5	88.6	17.3	51.6	3 027.9
Total	1 217.1	912.0	484.3	306.0	289.9	95.6	20.5	57.1	3 382.6
1992 — Financial	985.1	755.0	402.0	272.0	256.4	87.4	15.5	49.2	2 822.6
Total	1 112.3	827.0	455.2	297.2	277.7	94.1	17.8	53.7	3 135.1
1993 — Financial	921.8	695.2	413.1	271.1	255.2	88.3	15.6	55.0	2 715.2
Total	1 037.5	770.6	456.5	294.0	269.9	94.0	17.3	60.3	3 000.1
1994 — Financial	886.8	628.8	402.8	250.8	205.5	80.3	15.8	53.2	2 524.0
Total	1 033.8	724.5	457.4	279.4	229.6	87.0	17.5	60.9	2 890.2
1995 — Financial	880.4	588.4	403.3	230.4	199.6	76.2	17.8	43.6	2 439.7
Total	1 001.6	669.7	451.5	257.6	224.9	83.4	19.1	48.5	2 756.3
1996 — Financial	891.6	583.3	411.2	224.2	199.4	76.9	18.2	45.7	2 450.4
Total	1 017.6	680.0	477.4	250.5	221.7	82.7	19.3	51.4	2 800.5

(a) Due to changes in union structures some members formerly recorded in New South Wales prior to 1993 are now included in the Australian Capital Territory. See paragraph 11 of the Explanatory Notes.

**3 TRADE UNION MEMBERS: PROPORTION OF TOTAL EMPLOYEES(a)**

	NSW(b)	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT(b)	Aust.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
MALES									
<b>As at 30 June</b>									
1991 — Financial	51	55	43	59	49	58	22	45	51
Total	61	62	50	65	55	64	27	51	59
1992 — Financial	47	52	40	57	47	58	20	40	47
Total	56	58	47	64	52	65	25	44	55
1993 — Financial	44	48	39	57	44	59	21	45	46
Total	52	54	44	63	47	64	24	51	51
1994 — Financial	40	41	36	50	34	52	22	42	40
Total	49	50	42	57	40	58	26	51	48
1995 — Financial	38	37	33	45	31	46	23	30	37
Total	46	44	39	52	37	53	26	36	44
1996 — Financial	38	35	33	45	30	45	23	32	36
Total	45	43	40	51	35	50	26	39	43
FEMALES									
<b>As at 30 June</b>									
1991 — Financial	44	43	37	50	37	50	25	37	42
Total	47	45	40	52	39	51	28	39	45
1992 — Financial	43	41	34	51	37	51	23	35	41
Total	45	42	37	53	38	53	25	37	43
1993 — Financial	41	37	36	49	38	55	24	35	40
Total	44	40	39	52	39	57	26	36	42
1994 — Financial	40	34	34	45	29	51	25	35	37
Total	42	36	36	49	30	53	26	36	39
1995 — Financial	37	30	32	41	28	48	27	31	34
Total	38	31	34	43	29	50	28	32	35
1996 — Financial	37	29	32	38	26	49	25	33	33
Total	39	31	35	41	28	51	25	35	35
PERSONS									
<b>As at 30 June</b>									
1991 — Financial	48	50	40	55	43	54	23	41	47
Total	55	55	46	59	48	58	27	45	53
1992 — Financial	45	47	37	54	43	55	22	38	44
Total	51	51	42	59	46	59	25	41	49
1993 — Financial	43	43	38	53	41	57	22	40	43
Total	48	48	42	58	44	61	25	44	47
1994 — Financial	40	38	35	48	32	51	23	38	38
Total	46	44	39	53	36	56	26	44	44
1995 — Financial	37	34	33	43	30	47	25	31	35
Total	43	38	37	48	34	52	27	34	40
1996 — Financial	37	32	33	42	29	47	24	33	35
Total	43	38	38	47	32	50	25	37	40

(a) Estimates of total employees used in calculating the proportion of trade union members to total employees have been derived from the ABS Labour Force Survey. See paragraph 9 of the Explanatory Notes.

(b) Due to changes in union structures some members formerly recorded in New South Wales prior to 1993 are now included in the Australian Capital Territory. See paragraph 11 of the Explanatory Notes.

#### 4 NUMBER OF STATES AND/OR TERRITORIES OF OPERATION

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six or more	Total all States
NUMBER OF UNIONS							
<b>As at 30 June</b>							
1991	156	9	3	16	12	79	275
1992	134	5	3	9	13	63	227
1993	122	5	2	5	8	46	188
1994	104	3	2	3	7	38	157
1995	94	4	1	3	5	35	142
1996	83	4	n.p.	4	5	34	132
NUMBER OF MEMBERS ('000)							
<b>As at 30 June</b>							
1991	578.6	22.9	4.6	140.5	132.2	2 503.9	3 382.6
1992	466.1	13.6	4.4	68.1	135.0	2 447.9	3 135.1
1993	488.7	12.2	9.2	21.5	73.5	2 395.1	3 000.1
1994	438.8	7.3	3.8	10.4	18.3	2 411.6	2 890.2
1995	420.3	16.0	3.0	7.6	14.7	2 294.8	2 756.3
1996	385.1	1.1	13.3	45.0	14.0	2 341.9	2 800.5

#### 5 NUMBER OF UNIONS ACCORDING TO SIZE OF UNION

Size of union (number of members)	As at 30 June 1992	As at 30 June 1993	As at 30 June 1994	As at 30 June 1995	As at 30 June 1996		
					Number of unions	% of total unions	Cumulative % of total unions
Under 100	32	29	26	22	21	15.9	15.9
100 and under 250	26	20	21	14	12	9.1	25.0
250 and under 500	18	14	10	16	18	13.6	38.6
500 and under 1 000	28	26	19	17	11	8.3	46.9
1 000 and under 2 000	21	18	15	12	14	10.6	57.5
2 000 and under 3 000	14	11	11	11	10	7.6	65.1
3 000 and under 5 000	16	15	7	10	6	4.5	69.6
5 000 and under 10 000	19	14	11	6	6	4.5	74.1
10 000 and under 20 000	15	8	9	10	10	7.6	81.7
20 000 and under 30 000	7	5	4	3	2	1.5	83.2
30 000 and under 40 000	6	3	4	5	5	3.8	87.0
40 000 and under 50,000	5	4	3	1	2	1.5	88.5
50 000 and under 80 000	5	8	4	3	3	2.3	90.8
80 000 and under 100 000	7	4	—	1	—	—	—
100 000 and over	8	9	13	11	12	9.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

## 6 NUMBER OF MEMBERS ACCORDING TO SIZE OF UNION

Size of union (number of members)	As at 30 June 1996							
	As at 30 June 1992	As at 30 June 1993	As at 30 June 1994	As at 30 June 1995	As at 30 June 1996	Average number of members per union	Total members	Cumu- lative total of members
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	%	%
Under 100	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.8	42	—	—
100 and under 250	4.1	2.9	3.6	2.5	2.1	159	0.1	0.1
250 and under 500	6.2	4.4	3.7	5.8	6.8	377	0.2	0.3
500 and under 1 000	19.8	18.7	13.4	13.1	8.6	780	0.3	0.6
1 000 and under 2 000	26.6	24.2	20.0	16.6	19.7	1 410	0.7	1.3
2 000 and under 3 000	35.2	26.7	27.7	26.8	25.1	2 512	0.9	2.2
3 000 and under 5 000	60.2	58.6	28.3	40.7	25.2	4 201	0.9	3.1
5 000 and under 10 000	123.9	95.3	75.3	44.5	46.0	7 661	1.6	4.7
10 000 and under 20 000	212.2	106.2	124.9	142.7	143.1	14 311	5.1	9.8
20 000 and under 30 000	170.9	115.2	89.4	75.8	49.4	24 718	1.8	11.6
30 000 and under 40 000	210.5	108.2	143.8	182.5	176.8	35 367	6.3	17.9
40 000 and under 50 000	220.2	168.4	127.3	46.6	88.2	44 111	3.2	21.1
50 000 and under 80 000	331.1	523.8	283.8	194.6	214.4	71 466	7.7	28.1
80 000 and under 100 000	633.7	359.0	—	96.9	—	—	—	—
100 000 and over	1 079.2	1 387.1	1 948.0	1 866.6	1 994.1	166 178	71.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 135.1</b>	<b>3 000.1</b>	<b>2 890.2</b>	<b>2 756.3</b>	<b>2 800.5</b>	<b>21 216</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

**1** The statistics in this publication have been compiled from questionnaires completed by individual trade unions and employee associations in respect of their membership and State of operation as at 30 June 1996. The collection was changed to a 30 June basis in 1985. Figures for previous years were collected as at 31 December.

### COVERAGE

**2** Current lists of trade unions are maintained by reference to the following sources:

- trade unions registered under the provisions of the various Federal and State Industrial Relations Acts, Trade Union Acts, etc.;
- unions reported to be engaged in conciliation and arbitration proceedings; and
- reports in trade journals, trade union and employer periodicals, newspapers and other publications.

**3** It should be noted that not all reporting trade unions are registered under industrial relations legislation or State Trade Union Acts.

**4** To reduce the possibility of duplication of the number of unions and members in these statistics, where a trade union is a branch of a larger trade union, only the larger organisation is counted. An interstate or federated trade union (i.e. a union with members in more than one State or Territory) is treated as a separate union in each State or Territory in which it has members, but is counted only once in the Australian total. Unions with interstate associations which are not strictly branches of a common organisation are counted as separate unions in the totals for Australia.

**5** The published numbers of trade unions vary from year to year as a result of amalgamations of unions, deregistration of unions, unions ceasing to operate, new unions being formed, existing organisations changing their status such that it brings them within the scope of the definition of a trade union (see paragraph 6), and unions reporting for the first time.

### DEFINITIONS

**6** For the purpose of these statistics a trade union is defined as an organisation, consisting predominantly of employees, the principal activities of which include the negotiation of rates of pay and conditions of employment for its members. Non-operating unions or branches, i.e. those with no members at the date of collection, are not included in the statistics.

**7** Financial members of trade unions are defined as dues-paying members no more than six months in arrears. The total number of members includes all persons (financial, unfinancial, honorary, suspended, junior, etc.) regarded by unions as members.

**8** Persons who are members of more than one union cannot be separately identified and are therefore counted more than once in the totals. The extent of this duplication is not known. Members of unions who work overseas are excluded from the reported membership data. Membership figures may be affected by differences in the concept of membership adopted by different unions or by the same union at different times (see paragraph 10 below).

**9** The approximate percentages of wage and salary earners in employment (i.e. employees) who were members of trade unions are shown in table 3. For the 30 June 1996 edition of this publication, the proportions of employees have been calculated back to 30 June 1991 using estimates of employees taken from the ABS Labour Force Survey only. Prior to the 30 June 1994 edition, estimates of employees were taken predominantly from the ABS Survey of Employment and Earnings (*Employed Wage and Salary Earners* (6248.0)). The percentages shown in table 3 should be regarded as giving only a broad indication of the extent of union membership among employees because they are based on estimates of employed wage and salary earners; the number of union members who were not employed (i.e. were unemployed, retired, etc.) will affect the percentages for a particular year and comparisons over time.

**10** Comparability of figures for different years may be affected by a number of factors. As stated in paragraph 8, there may be duplication in the count of members. This duplication may vary over time. Union rules on membership may follow different concepts and practices and this may be reflected in the level and fluctuations of the figures reported. Individual unions may or may not include in their reported membership unemployed members, members who have retired from the labour force, disabled members, members with dues in arrears (who may be kept on union books for varying lengths of time), etc.

**11** Membership of trade unions is shown separately for males and females for each State and Territory. The subdivision of total membership into males and females is not precise because some trade unions are unable to state the exact number of male and female members. The subdivision of total membership by States and Territories is also not precise because some unions in the Territories are affiliated with State organisations and their membership is reported under the heading of that State. For example, some unions in the Northern Territory are affiliated with unions registered in Queensland or in South Australia. In addition the record keeping practices of unions may vary over time and this will affect the division of membership by State and Territory.

ORGANISATIONS  
REGISTERED UNDER  
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
LEGISLATION

**12** As at 30 June 1996, there were 46 employee unions registered under the *Federal Industrial Relations Act 1988* with a membership of 2,406,100. In comparison, as at 30 June 1995, there were 51 employee unions with a membership of 2,361,400.

**13** 1996 membership figures reflect 86% of total reported trade union membership.

**14** Industrial relations legislation in most States also provides for the registration of employee associations. Some employee associations are registered under more than one Act but these are counted only once in these statistics.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER  
STATISTICS

**15** Statistics on trade union membership obtained from a supplementary survey to the labour force survey have been published biennially in *Trade Union Members, Australia* (6325.0) and more recently in the 1993 edition of *Working Arrangements, Australia* (6342.0). The estimates from these surveys are lower than those obtained from this census for a number of reasons, including the following:

- estimates from the Trade Union Members and Working Arrangements surveys relate only to trade union membership in the respondent's main job; a person who was a member of a trade union only by virtue of holding a second job was excluded;
- they relate only to trade union membership in one job, whereas a person who had recently changed jobs could be registered as a member of more than one union in the Trade Union Census;
- the estimates relate only to persons who were employees in their main job in the reference week: other persons (e.g. unemployed and those not in the labour force) are excluded even though they may have retained union membership in respect of some earlier employment;
- some persons may elect to belong to more than one union, but would be counted only once in the supplementary surveys;
- some unions may encounter difficulties in maintaining up-to-date registers of members. Numbers reported in the Trade Union Census may therefore include persons who are no longer members.

## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

**16** Users may also wish to refer to the following publications and standard data services which are available from ABS bookshops:

- *Award Rates of Pay Indexes, Australia* (6312.0) — issued monthly
- *Employed Wage and Salary Earners, Australia* (6248.0) — issued quarterly
- *Industrial Disputes, Australia* (6321.0) — issued monthly
- *Industrial Disputes, Australia* (6322.0) — issued annually
- *Labour Force, Australia* (6203.0) — issued monthly
- *Labour Force, Australia, Preliminary* (6202.0) — issued monthly
- *Labour Statistics, Australia* (6101.0) — issued irregularly
- *Trade Union Members, Australia, August 1994* (6325.0.40.001) — standard data service
- *Weekly Earnings of Employees (Distribution), Australia, August 1995* (6310.0.40.001) — standard data service
- *Working Arrangements, Australia, August 1995* (6342.0.40.001) — standard data service

## UNPUBLISHED STATISTICS

**17** In some cases, the ABS can also make available information which is not published. This information may be made available in one or more of the following forms: microfiche, photocopy, floppy disc, computer printout, clerically-extracted tabulation. Generally, a charge is made for providing unpublished information. Inquiries regarding data availability and associated charges should be directed to Henry Ferst on: (03) 9615 7980, or to Information Services in the nearest ABS office.

**18** Current publications produced by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications and Products* (1101.0). The ABS also issues, on Tuesdays and Fridays, a *Release Advice* (1105.0) which lists publications to be released in the next few days. The Catalogue and Release Advice are available from any ABS office.



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